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THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY AND ITS FRUITS.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE INSTALLATION

OF

REV. HORATIO ALGER,

AS PASTOR OF

THE WEST CHURCH, IN MARLBOROUGH, MASS.

JANUARY 22, 1845.

BY REV. GEORGE E. ELLIS,
PASTOR OF THE HARVARD CHURCH, CHARLESTOWN.

WITH THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

AND

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE.

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE & CO.
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SERMON.

2 PETER, 1: 8.

"FOR IF THESE THINGS BE IN YOU AND ABOUND, THEY MAKE YOU THAT YE SHALL NEITHER BE BARREN NOR UNFRUITFUL IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

THESE words, interpreted by the help of the occasion which has brought us here, present us with a subject for Christian discourse. The duties and the feelings involved in these services, can find no better expression than in the hallowed sentences of Apostolic counsel. The first pastors of the Church are examples to their successors, in life, in doctrine, and in exhortation. In conformity with their institution, prayer and religious discourse will express the solemn and renewed consecration of our brother to the work which, by this simple transfer of recognitions, has been perpetuated through long centuries. While the outward rite addresses the eye, the sacred lessons which lie beneath it and give it its signification, must be impressed upon the heart.

In all the voluntarily assumed relations of life, the affections, purposes and obligations depending upon them, are of a delicate and responsible character; they cannot be easily expressed in all their fulness by words. Yet of all

such relations, while the sacred office stands out most prominent as involving so much of sacred sentiment and undefinable duty, the words of Apostolic counsel present us with a few comprehensive truths, from which, if our hearts are interested, we may gather light, wisdom, and reasonable expectations of good. These installation services perpetuate the Christian ministry; the Christian ministry is an institution which men find it in their hearts to support, because it recommends itself to them by their necessities and its own fruits. If those who enter into this relation of teacher and taught, feel the value of those "exceeding great and precious promises," those graces and hopes which the Apostle enumerates, it will be their earnest desire, — and if their desire, — then their effort too, that they "be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us then pursue a theme recommended to us by hallowed example, and by this impressive occasion. Melancholy, romantic, yet altogether unnatural feelings gather around the sad ceremonial in which the maiden parts with her flowing tresses, and the sympathies of life, to wed the cloister as a nun. We deem that sacrifice undesired of God, and therefore unblessed of God, save as true piety may triumph over its disguises. But when the strength of manhood, fitted by lengthened preparation, and yield by cheerful consecration, bows itself in humility before God, and devotes itself to a holy work in the open world of conflict and temptation, — then we feel all that manly sentiment may prompt.

The Christian ministry is an institution which God has sanctioned and blessed, as a medium through which he communicates spiritual gifts to the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this condition attends them, that the receivers "be neither barren nor unfruitful." But

how shall the means be applied to secure the end? In other words, what are the conditions by which spiritual life and the power of the Gospel are to be enjoyed in a Christian society? This is the inquiry which I would now pursue. I see around me a company of men, women and children, and they are furnished with hearts, and are meeting the experiences of a strange and mysterious lot. The Sabbath and the Bible, the sanctuary, the utterances of prayer and praise, the appointed and consecrated expounder of God's truth, offer themselves to aid in imparting spiritual gifts to these needy hearts.

Spiritual life should be to a Christian society the chief object of expectation and desire; its absence should be looked upon as a most distressing symptom, as a dread mockery. The faith which once brightened the hidden tombs with its divine lessons, must nowhere be so fruitlessly entertained, as to turn our churches into tombs where the dead bury their dead. How shall the Christian ministry be effectual to securing spiritual life? I do not ask how it shall sustain itself as a profession, an office, an emolument, a place for some to enjoy, and for others to support. Priestcraft, against which some inveigh as expressing the Christian ministry, is in fact the alternative of the Christian ministry, something which must surely fill the place of the ministry if the ministry does not do its true work. There is no fear that religious teachers will ever cease to be sustained, let their office degenerate as low as it may, for the Christian ministry would have many downward steps to take before it came to the level of a heathen priesthood, which is its only possible substitute. I ask not how the Christian ministry may be sustained, but I ask the conditions on which its highest and self-recommending fruits may be enjoyed. How, in any place, how in this place shall it do the work

of Jesus Christ, in enlightening, renewing, and guiding heavenward the hearts of human beings? How shall it win for itself a place in human affections most cherished and dear? How shall it be able to draw you from your homes to the sanctuary, or to win its abode with you in your homes, and according as life presents to you its tranquil waters, or its billows of sorrow, how shall it have power to speak to your condition? We ask this question in a Christian church — where the word has been preached with faithfulness and with power. If held to a strict account you would have to answer for the fruits of those lessons which you have heard from this desk. Let me thus kindly remind you of past opportunities, for they confirm present obligations.

To ensure spiritual life without spasmodic action, and true Christian progress without excitement and consequent depression, is the object which, as Christians we would have in view. Till the end is attained, and while it is faithfully sought, we may be subject to continual disappointments and failures, but the end, with its substantial reward, will meet our full desires. Our age, with its intense intellectual and moral action, is to do a great part, though not the whole, in testing whether Christianity is sufficient, whether it will meet the wants of highly cultivated minds, and give the law to the perpetual changes in human concerns, and restrain a civilization which is fertile in dangers and crimes, and cheer and crown the efforts of those lovely charities which it surely inspires. Is man's intellect to see behind the Gospel, and trace it then to earth or heaven? Is man's heart to live in peace here and place its hopes in a hereafter? These questions, and how many more, — are involved in those conditions, by which spiritual life is to be enjoyed as a fruit of the Christian ministry in a Christian society.

What then are the conditions of spiritual life in a Christian society? The general answer to this question is, that these conditions require the skilful and faithful use of the means which God has appointed. Dividing this general answer into the two comprehensive themes which enter into it, we may distinguish and present the two great conditions on which spiritual life, true, vital, earnest, practical and efficient Christian life, do depend. Let us seek for clear and definite impressions concerning them. For upon this, and upon all other religious topics, let us assure ourselves of the importance of the foundation sentiments, the main pillars which support our religious convictions. We are continually falling back upon them, — let them be strong.

I. The first condition of spiritual life in a society, so that it "shall be neither barren nor unfruitful," is that the true and the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ be faithfully preached. There is not visible on this earth a more manifest illustration of the connection between cause and effect, than is involved in the fulfilment of this condition and the experience of its sure results. Show me a place and an age in which the true and the pure Gospel has been preached, and I will show you the fruits of that faithful ministration of the word in the manifestations of spiritual life. *The true and the pure* Gospel — those epithets, and the characteristics which they denote, are above all things essential. For there has been preaching without the fruits of the Spirit, and much that has been sown as the seed of the Word, has come up as thorns. The history of the Christian Church, the present aspect of Christendom, is a full commentary upon the indispensable condition of the true and the pure Gospel for securing spiritual life. Leave out one doctrine of the Gospel, or lay a disproportioned stress upon one doc-

trine of the Gospel, and you have departed from those characteristics of *the true and the pure*, in which lies the power of the Gospel. That word *Gospel* must cover by its signification each message which it embraces. It signifies *good tidings*, and, therefore, words of life, deliverance, peace and promise, must mingle in its counsels and animate its appeals.

The first element of power in the preaching of the Gospel, is found in its supernatural revelation of spiritual truth, — *its supernatural revelation of truth*, — as it is the medium of communicating to this earth, the light of truth from a source beyond this earth. Christian graces, principles, affections and hopes are only the parts of a Christian character which stand up and sustain themselves upon a foundation laid in the heart and in the mind. The foundation is unseen; but there must be a foundation, and that foundation must repose upon the assured conviction that heaven and earth have been brought together by a connecting medium in Christianity.

The question has been warmly asked, not in this age only, but in all ages of the Church, what constitutes a Christian believer as respects faith? This vital question is often answered with reference only to the creeds and articles of different sects, and when thus debated it is an idle, a wholly unprofitable question. It ought, however, to address itself on this wise, to each individual heart and mind. What must I believe, to make me in my faith a Christian? When thus asked, it is answered by putting another question — What do I expect from my faith? For if I can know its purpose, I can learn its character. What do I seek that Jesus Christ and his religion shall do for me? If he is to lead on my mind from earth to heaven, and teach me what mortal man

cannot teach, and assure me of truths which the wisdom and the light of science, the strainings of an anxious curiosity, and the intuitions of my conscious breast cannot prove to me, — then, *then*, I must believe that he came from that higher realm, where truth in its fulness abides, and where what is faith on earth is perfect vision. I must believe that he came out from God to those whom he would lead back to God. Nothing less of belief, will fulfil the purpose of belief. The allowance of the supernatural makes a demand upon our belief, but it is likewise the reward of belief, it purchases belief. To be believers in Jesus Christ in any sense which involves religious faith, the very least that we can do is to admit unreservedly and heartily, that in his character and doctrine there is mingled something that is not of the earth, we must believe that he saw behind the veil of mortal things, that he knew the Father as no other being has known the Father, and that what he taught to men was spoken with an authority which belongs to no other utterances that have ever fallen from human lips, upon human ears. We must believe this much as the very minimum of faith, in order to secure any advantage, to obtain any blessing from our faith. These I grant are stupendous admissions; they demand an enormous, struggling effort from the reluctant, hesitating faith of men,— yet they are the very first conditions of a belief which shall add anything to what the dead clods and the lips of erring, sinning men can teach us.

I repeat, then, the element of power in the Christian faith is its certification of the things that are unseen, its assurance of truths, which, though reason may embrace, reason may not prove. The first tenet of belief which we hold as Christians, is that spiritual light has come from heaven into this world, that from a source exte-

rior and superior to this earth, illuminating rays have been cast from the Father of all intelligence and affection, upon the path of mortal discipline, and upon the dim expectations of human desire. Around this first tenet must be gathered all the confidence and effort of our faith. With hearts made worldly and corrupt, it is hard to believe it; with minds habituated to receiving all their knowledge through the senses, it seems difficult to credit it, but though hard and difficult, it is not impossible. Man must rouse himself to feel, that even as animated dust, as flesh and bone, wrought by a marvellous mechanism, and even more as a quickened spirit, he is a monument of power divine. He must connect earth with heaven for his soul, as earth and heaven are connected for his body. For indeed the very light and heat which kindles the dead clods of the earth's matter, and swells the bountiful corn on the meadows, and paints the lovely flower in the wilderness, this light, this heat, is not of the earth, it comes to the earth, not from it, it has travelled from a far, long distance; ages and ages has it been piercing its progress through the million leagues of space, and still with each morning's sun does it pierce the dense atmosphere of the earth. And so too the sweet influences of that lesser orb, the cold but radiant planet of the midnight-sky, — outside and above the earth, do gently sway the water and the air, the tides and the breezes of the earth, with the healthful motion whose cessation or pause would commission the pestilence to destroy. Now if the dead clod, and the rolling ocean, and the hurrying winds, passionless elements as they are, do feel and obey an influence outside of this earth, may not the heart and the mind of man, his moral education, his sorrows and hopes be subject to a heavenly control, an unearthly impulse, direction and aim?

It is, as I have said, the first tenet of our belief, the point at which our faith, through patient thought and effort, must be made most willing and strong, that for man's soul, as well as for his body, heaven and earth have been united. That is the foundation, the interpretation, the soul and the body, the living form, the inspired and the inspiring philosophy of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Behold, in how few, how simple words, he stated the sublime truth, "Light has come into the world." Light from heaven, truth, love and promise from the Father of all spirits, to the children of his grace. How earnest, how impressive is the lesson of that heavenly messenger, when summed up in that figure of Light! In some holy moment of the soul, when it traces back the glimmering ray which makes its essence, to the Father of Light, the mystery of the Spirit stands revealed, and then we trust, and our thoughts are prayers, our hopes are promises, to which God will not be unfaithful.

"Light is come into the world." This is the first of all Christian convictions, and he by whom and through whom this light was manifest, speaks to us the next lesson of our faith — "I am the light of the world." — Jesus Christ is the medium through which heaven and earth have been united. The student of human history well knows that the longings of the human heart have ever been for some intervening object to lead on the line of vision from earth to heaven, from man to God. And this is the interpretation of the history of all the soul's struggles; past heathenism is full of it, whether we read it in the unsolaced lamentations of Cicero for a beloved daughter, dead, or in the fond devices of the priests of Indus. "Man every where longs for a God," said the most ancient of profane writers. For the human heart

has conceptions of the great Being but too far removed, incomprehensible, not to be realised; and the longing has been that the wide, unmeasured interval, the awful profound of dividing space, might be marked by one intervening object, a medium — a mind — a heart — a voice — midway along the undiscovered track. The human race has thus sought a *mediator* between God and man. Such was Jesus Christ; not the Almighty, but his Son and servant, not he who sent, but him who was sent — sent to reveal the Father, and to lead us back to the Father.

And then from this Mediator we receive the message of life and peace spoken by his own lips, — "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly. He that believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but hath passed from death unto life." He addressed man as a child of God and an heir of immortality. He made the relation of a father to be the tie which bound us to the unchanging, the inalienable love of God. He consecrated every sentiment which enters into that relation, and, of course, he ascribed the higher power to the pitiful, the tender, the loving affections. Jesus Christ never spoke of God as a sovereign; he seems never to have dwelt upon his dread majesty; it was as a father that he loved him, and it was as to a father that he would lead us back. But in offering us life — spiritual life — he spared not to tell us that we are dead in trespasses and sins, that wickedness alienates us from God, and that only thorough repentance can reconcile us to him. Jesus Christ disclosed the true state, warfare, conflict, and mode of deliverance, renovation, culture, and consecration of man's heart. He indicated those native powers, those elements of moral action with which man was furnished by God, and which might be directed by the will

to wrong or right. He plainly opens our eyes to see how strong a headway, how well nigh omnipotent a control sin has acquired in this world. His first effort to each heart that he addresses, is to impress a conviction of that sin, to show the heart alienated from God, wedded and bound to iniquity, and therefore pierced with anxieties, wounded, wretched, and treasuring up new woes as it wanders in its wrong, but voluntarily chosen path. Yet in that very heart he sees an element to quicken, a feeling to engage, a chord to touch, a capacity to consecrate, a power to resolve, repent, and by God's blessing never denied, to return to the forsaken arms of love. To turn those estranged feelings to reconciled feelings, is his work, and the work of his Gospel. All other doctrines of the Christian faith enter into, or flow out of those which we have passed before us. And this is the true Gospel, expressed as far as it may be expressed in words of spirit and of life. Jesus Christ is the medium by which light shines from heaven upon the soul of men, — that light is to chase away darkness from the soul. This is the true Gospel which is to be preached in all the world; never in vain, never without imparting spiritual life to those who will receive it. Thus the Apostles preached, and not in vain. Thus let the Gospel be preached here, and it cannot be in vain.

And then it must be the pure Gospel; the Gospel as Jesus Christ announced it, — nothing added, nothing lost. The power of the Gospel lies in its truth, its own truth. Let us not marvel that corruptions and perversions have mingled with the faith as popularly cherished. The fountain is of God, the flowing stream passes through human channels, which change its color and mix with it their own impurities. It must be the Gospel which was preached first, and most effectually, its simple truths

addressing themselves to the heart and to the mind, not insulting the reason, but satisfying it; not withering the affections, but consecrating them.

A faithful preaching of the Gospel requires in the preacher much knowledge of the human heart, and comprehensive views of life. The Christian minister who would be useful in his profession, and do a real good to those for whom he labors, must found his faith in the power which he can exert, upon a conviction that men need what he can impart. He must know the wants of human beings, their deepest, their truest, their most real wants. From a wide survey of all the varieties of condition and character among men, drawing just conclusions, and making fair allowances, the minister is to obtain his knowledge of what is wanted by all hearts, and upon that knowledge he is to base his idea of his own office, his apprehension of the value of Christianity, of the mode of applying its lessons, and of the results which he shall aim to produce. He must make allowances for individual differences among men, for the predominance of one or another element in their characters, and then he will discern the common weaknesses and wants which demand the very counsels he has to give. Herein will lie his strength; that he knows the heart, and he knows the Gospel, and then it will require no other skill beside that of earnestness and discretion to fit them together. He knows what the world was, and what it would be without Christianity, and thus he may realize what it is to be made to be by Christianity. There is one conviction, which, to the minister, is worth more than any other means of influence that he possesses; it is an entire satisfaction in his own mind, that every living being needs the light and comfort of Christian doctrine. But he must attain that conviction by his own observation, by a study

of his own heart, and by a familiar intercourse with the world. There is much discouragement and misgiving to be encountered on the way to it, but still it may be attained, and then it is worth all its cost. From an eminence raised far higher than a pulpit, the minister may look around over his great or little sphere, and see that all error and weakness, all excess and short-coming, all doubts and anxiety, are the manifestations of hearts which have not yet found their highest love, or are cold, divided, unwilling in their devotion.

He will know that the admonitions and the counsels of the Gospel draw their value from the struggle of the heart, and the warfare of life, a struggle and a warfare which are not essentially varied by any differences in human condition as respects wealth, education, intelligence or refinement. The earnest, faithful preaching of the true word, with its application to the experience of life, through the changing seasons of the year, and the vicissitudes of earthly discipline, must depend for its success upon the power of Christian appeals to the heart. Then shall the preacher be able to say to all his flock, together or one by one, — you lack something which I can give you; I know you lack it, — I will impart it, if you will receive it.

II. There is a second condition, consequent upon the first, the counterpart of the first, for the enjoyment of spiritual life in a Christian society; it is the faithful reception and improvement of those influences which it is the work of the Christian ministry to impart. If the preaching of the true and the pure Gospel is the duty of the minister, the duties of those who are the recipients of his influence, must together ensure that "ye be neither barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The part which the members of a Christian society are to perform to ensure their flourishing spiritual condition,

might be gathered from the fitness of a mutual relation, from past experience, whether it speak of success or of failure, and from the present aspect of the times. The ministry has been thought to have enjoyed a peculiar influence over the people, and to have peculiarly enlisted their coöperation in this community. There is very much that might favor this prevailing idea, but as a confirmed fact, it will not admit of being carried to the lengths to which it is sometimes urged. There have been two periods when the people, that is, the members of Christian societies in these regions, were heart and soul enlisted in the interests of the clergy, receiving their counsels, treasuring up their words, fighting their battles, dressing their wounds, eulogising their memories and inscribing their tomb-stones with reverent affection. The first of these periods was the half century which followed the settlement of the country, the second period was that era of intense controversy, which lives now in the memory of the advanced in life. That this first, this earliest period should have been marked by an earnest interest in religion, shared by every individual in one of our forest churches, is nothing remarkable. It is to be explained as much by the peculiar influences which educated and which surrounded the people as by the power of Christian doctrines. They were exiles and they were sufferers. An exalted trust, an all-enduring self-denial were the very elements of their life. The forsaking of a dear home, the perils of an unknown ocean, the seclusions, the labors, and the privations of a wilderness abode, weaned them from earth, and denied them all other resources save those of hope and faith. The whole interest of existence was concentrated for them upon the offices of piety. Only like circumstances and influences can impart such constancy, zeal, and such self-renouncing engagedness in religion.

The other period of popular religious interest in our community, the period of doctrinal controversy, cannot well be marked in our annals as eminent in the fruits of piety or brotherly love. The mouldering pamphlets which contain its records, seem to us now rather like the spent balls of an angry strife, than like the kindly interchange of opinions, and of the mutual offices of Christian love. At these two periods laymen did share the zeal of their ministers. But the general, the prevailing state of things has been and is now, the imposing upon the ministers too much of the responsibility of securing a flourishing condition of the spiritual interests of the societies. They have been delegated, as much as were ever the priests of Romanism, to save souls by their own magic. They have preached, and visited the sick; their flocks have expected it of them. They have chosen texts and written sermons, and delivered them as a matter of course. The people have heard, and as a general thing have listened, that is, to use their own language, they "have sat under preaching," — a most judicious phrase, because equivocal, since it does not commit those who use it as having been asleep or awake. But where have been their hearts? Some of them, thank God, in the right places, open to impression, and receiving it, feeling the power of truth, treasuring it up, renewed and sanctified by it. But many, shall we not say most, have looked upon preaching as a matter of course, and allowed the professional character of the minister to take from the weight of his counsels. Religion has been too much severed from affection, from sympathy, from social intercourse, from every day relations, and while the church spires have pointed upwards, vital piety has languished.

I love and cherish too dearly these regions, embalmed with the memories and consecrated by the dust of our

revered puritan ancestry, our pious and godly fathers, our excellent and venerated mothers, to deny that Christian faith has received of them its most sublime attestations, its most winning examples. I care not for the grim theology *which they thought* was the source of their piety, — they forgot it in their love and duty, in their heart's prayers, and their works of faithful Christian effort. I honor all that they truly honored, I love all that they loved. The firesides of their ancient mansions, which are yet spared, the porches through which they went forth to their unadorned temples, the graves where their ashes have long been undistinguishable from common clay, — all these call back to me the departed disciples of our Redeemer, and when they come it is with holy associations, transfigured and exalted, the witnesses that their own prayers prevailed with God and with themselves. Yet had they their earthly trials, their mortal weaknesses when in the flesh. They cherished and revered the ministers of Christ, they loved the house of God, they educated their offspring by the power of holy lessons. Yet they contested and disputed; religion was not to them all a spirit of life and peace; they had envying and bickerings. Popes too they had in towns and counties, and even these wilderness roads around us have been trodden by the hasty feet of pilgrims, travelling not to honored shrines, but to contentious councils, to ferment or to decide some strife about the terms of a covenant, which could not then be made to appear of the least practical moment, and which, we must truly believe, they on their own translation to the land of peace, did not find to be written in the Lamb's book of life.

The people of New England have sustained and loved the ministry; they have loved the Bible; their charities to the poor and wretched have flown in unstinted meas-

ure; parental discipline and moral education have ever been their pride. Indeed, one would have need to draw very nice distinctions who should undertake to designate in what respects or particulars our churches have fulfilled or fallen short of the demands of a deep, heartfelt, practical and efficient piety: how far they comprehended in its length and breadth the power and operation of the Gospel: how far they realized in their own minds and souls the lessons of that faith which makes us all the loved children of a heavenly Father, endowed with immortal capacities, destined for infinite progress. Were we to attribute the state of our churches to influences operating and coming down from the opinions and practices of our ancestors, we should need to ascribe to them some deficiencies, for the piety of New England never has reached the Christian standard, and the signs of languishing and decay, feeble churches and lifeless congregations, do prove that their faith could not perpetuate its own peculiarities. They were men of their own day; they sat under such preaching as satisfied them, and if we can discern defects, it is for us to improve upon them, not to hold them up to an unkind and unfilial, and therefore an unchristian criticism.

In all our churches now, whatever their creeds or covenants, the serious truth has found reception, that the enjoyment of Spiritual Life depends upon the harmonious coöperation of those united by a Christian tie, in endeavoring to accomplish the great object which they have at heart, to apply religious truth to life. Here the divine word is to be preached, and you are to hear it, not as critics nor as intellectual persons, but as worshippers of the Almighty God, as disciples of Jesus Christ, as mortals, as sinners, as the heirs of sorrow, as pilgrims, as expectants of immortality. The aim of every sermon,

the spirit of every prayer, is, to rouse you to a sense of the deep mystery of your conscious existence, to define to you your place and work in the creation of God, to reach your heart and rule its passions and train its affections, to pour over the scenes of mortal discipline the full light which Jesus Christ brought into the world, that you may speak and think and live and do, and, above all things, feel, as followers of the Divine Master. The mystery of your own existence; that is, the foundation of your faith. In vain will be all preaching and praying for you till you realize it. And your minister can only *help* you to realize it, for you must verify all his lessons in your own souls. You must think for yourselves; you must pray for yourselves, you must read your own hearts — you must struggle, you must resolve, you must do all as if there were none but God to aid you — and then and then only, you will find help in your minister. Can you expect any continued interest in Christian doctrine, till that heart within you, which all of it addresses, has been confronted with daylight experiences, and midnight meditations, and made to realize the mystery of its own consciousness, the agonies of its unresting conscience, the sting of its bosom woes, the peace of its reconciliation to God? Let your minister address awakened hearts, for thus alone can he be your guide, thus alone will he be answerable "that ye be neither barren nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let not a single agency or means of Christian impression escape you unimproved. Make the Sabbath your delight, love the sanctuary where the honor of your God dwelleth; gather your endeared and tender sympathies around the beautiful ordinance of baptism — by which the Lambs are committed to the kind care of the Good Shepherd — and let the pure water be the emblem of that

purity, which by parental vows you promise shall be the shield of the opening souls committed to your care. Meet at the table of your departed Lord, your present friend, and let the dumb symbols which his love hath consecrated, be eloquent memorials of the lesson of his life, so that it may become the joy and duty of your own. Thus as individuals, personally, each alone, you are to receive the influences which the faithful use of the means of religious culture will impart.

And when the individual heart or mind has thus received with gladness, and verified by its deep searchings, the spiritual truths of the Gospel, there are common duties, common labors, in which the members of a Christian Society may engage. You must live as Christians, you must cause your light to shine, and be known to each other as those to whom religion is the greatest of realities. The variances of religious opinion, the warfare of sects, the efforts of all denominations to strengthen themselves, have well-nigh brought about the most unlooked-for result, of making each individual, in the true spirit of Protestantism, to be his own pope and spiritual counsellor. In this fact we are furnished with abundant evidence of the folly of all dogmatism, and of the short-lived existence of any particular religious party. There is one doctrine at least which no large number of men can ever be made to believe, whether enforced by the rack, the faggot, the prison, or by intolerance and bigotry — and that is, that the awards of the future state depend upon speculative opinions. Men will not believe it; they cannot believe it. The hardest of all controversies to decide, are religious controversies; yet the easiest of all questions to answer is, whether this or that man be a disciple of Jesus Christ — it is by the Master's own test, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The deepest and truest religious sentiments seek a sacred privacy, and only there alone can live in full sincerity and power. Christian works must abound, as outward manifestations of a true Christian spirit; "that ye be not barren or unfruitful." The growth of this Society will be best secured by the growth of each member of it, in active, faithful, and steadily progressive efforts to lead a Christian life. As you receive, so will your minister impart.

Renew, then, this day, your Christian vows, your baptismal consecration, your sacramental pledge. We have meditated upon some awfully momentous truths; let the solemnities of this occasion enforce them. The love of Jesus Christ, and the faithful service of God, promise to us all the most real joy of life. What else shall cheer us when life is loosening its ties, and desire fails, and those around us wait for our last breath? What else shall prepare us for our great account to Him, who is the Judge of the quick and the dead?

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

By REV. WASHINGTON GILBERT, OF HARVARD.

I REJOICE, my brother, to behold the light of this day. And the pleasure which the present scene is adapted to awaken in every bosom solicitous for the triumph of a pure spiritual faith, is doubly enhanced to myself from a consideration of the very grateful duty, the discharge of which is assigned me in the solemnities of this day. While meditating on the perfect harmony of the proceedings, which have resulted in this interesting scene, and witnessing the religious satisfaction manifested by this thronging assembly, who have come up hither to join in the solemnization of those rites, which are to bind you to them by the most endearing and sacred ties, my thoughts involuntarily turn to that upper world, where there is but one heart and one voice, where the glory of God and the highest interest of his everlasting kingdom are the centre of all desires, and the living spring of all joys, and where its members, having but one object before them, and breathing the same celestial spirit, no jar of discordant feelings is heard, but where the mild lustre and tranquillity of an eternal spring encircle all.

To shed this tranquillizing spirit over the great, yet troubled and agitated heart of humanity, the brightest of those pure beings, who keep watch around the eternal throne, has visited our world. His heavenly purpose was announced on the plains of Bethlehem, in the chorus of angels, and taught in his beautiful beatitudes, and illustrated in his meek, his unresisting and spotless life. And when he ascended on high, the richest legacy which he left behind, was his benediction of peace.

And to preserve in all coming time, this peace, this harmony, this "unity of the spirit" in the fellowship of the Gospel, among his followers, and especially among his ministering servants, his Apostles instituted and gave the right hand of fellowship to those, who, in the spirit of self-consecration, had prepared themselves for the "ministry of reconciliation." And it has been a hallowed usage of the church, in every succeeding age, when a brother was inducted into the sacred office, or into a new sphere of duty, to present him this pledge of fraternal confidence and affection.

With the feelings which must be stirring in you on this interesting occasion, you cannot deem this usage an idle form, or an inappropriate observance. For I am persuaded that to you, to those who have called you to be the "helper of their joy," to the multitudes who have but now raised their united and fervent prayers to heaven, for that efficient influence, which alone can secure your future usefulness and happiness, this occasion is full of a peculiar, a sacred interest. The cheering hopes and anticipations which it awakens, reach forward to the dim and unexplored future. They are connected with all the yet unrevealed mysteries of your mortal life, and with that higher and holier existence, whose perfection and bliss are the objects of the devoutest aspirations of the soul.

And in what is so deeply interesting to you, your ministerial brethren here assembled, are happy in the adoption of this significant mode of expressing their sympathy.

In their name, therefore, and in the name of the churches worshipping "one God and Father," I present you, my brother, this Right Hand of Fellowship. Rest assured, it is accompanied with their best wishes; — the long friendship that has subsisted between ourselves, is a sufficient guarantee that my own go with it. Accept it as a token of the fraternal sentiments with which we hail your accession to this new field of labor, of the high regard to which, both by your position and character, we deem you entitled, and of the deep satisfaction we feel in congratulating you on the cheering prospects of usefulness and honor which have opened before you. Accept it as an acknowledgment of your equality in official rank and rights, with each and every duly constituted minister of the religion of Jesus. Accept it, in fine, as a pledge of our most hearty coöperation and sympathy in all those toils and trials incident to the Christian ministry, in which a just appreciation of duty, no less than sincere fraternal regard, should prompt our hearts and hands to participate. And in all this, my brother, we shall regard your acceptance of the hand thus offered you, as a pledge of a reciprocity of the same sentiments and conduct.

I cannot forbear, my brother, the utterance of a few words of personal welcome. At least, I feel impelled to discharge, in some sort, the debt incurred some fourteen years since, at your hands, when entering upon the duties of the sphere in which God has cast my lot, you offered me the fellowship of the churches, and the sympathy of the brethren, and by the warm pressure of that right hand so often grasped in friendship, and by words of cheer, you reassured my then inexperienced and sinking heart, for

the great burden of duty that was henceforth to rest upon me.

I do, therefore, most cordially congratulate you, my brother, on the flattering auspices under which you commence your present ministerial labors. The perfect unanimity which has marked the deliberations of those, who, with so great consent, invited you to take charge of their spiritual concerns, affords a favorable omen of their continued kindness and indulgence. But I need not inform you that the ministerial office, under the most favorable circumstances, has its trials and perplexities. Your past experience must have taught you, that they are neither few in number, nor limited in extent But in the face of them all, I welcome you to this field of ministerial exertion. Indeed, I can have no voice but that of the most cordial welcome to one, who, with an enlightened mind and a devoted heart, enters upon the duties of the pastoral relation. I welcome you to it, as one relation in life, if there be no other, where between yourself and those to whom you are most closely bound, there can be, or at least, there need be, no antagonism of interests; where you are the chosen, the confidential friend of all; where the increasing temporal or spiritual prosperity of all can awaken within you no feeling but that of pleasure; where you may put forth your most vigorous efforts, and they are not received with the suspicion of a sinister motive, may offer your sympathies, and pour out the full upswellings of your affections, and they are not rejected. I welcome you to this relation as an appropriate field for the consecration of every faculty to the advancement of the great and vital interests of humanity, the diffusion of spiritual light and heavenly love. And there is no satisfaction, short of the beatitude of perfected spirits, so pure and complete as that which results from the consciousness of

doing good. Yes, the consecration of ourselves, with singleness of purpose, to a benevolent end, carries with it its own "exceeding great reward." Cherish then, my brother, a noble ambition. Let it be to do good, and not to do evil, to diffuse the spirit of life and not the spirit of death. Let it be to rear upon the ruins of error and vice, the standard of the cross; to carry conviction to the minds, and to take captive the wills of men, by the all-conquering might of redeeming love; to win the gratitude and affection of the ignorant whom you have enlightened, the doubting to whom you have imparted confidence, the sorrowing whose troubled bosoms you have hushed by the voice of consolation, the deluded prodigal whom you have sought out in his wanderings, and led back to his Father's house of mercy.

Finally, my brother, in the name of those who have deputed me to address you on their behalf, and I need not add in my own name, I wish you all the success in your new relation, which you, in the blush of its commencement may anticipate, or the most enlarged philanthropy can desire. I devoutly pray that, under your ministry, many of this beloved flock may be led into the spiritual fold of Christ, that many souls regenerate and baptised, may be given you here, who, in the church above, shall be presented "as the seal of your ministry and the crown of your rejoicing."

And may guardian angels hold continual watch over your happiness. May your whole career be as peaceful and as full of hope as this hallowed hour of its commencement. May all "sweet influences" be ever present to encourage and cheer you. May the kindly affections of this people cluster around you to solace and sustain you in your arduous duties. May the blessed spirit of heaven fall gently and rest upon you, — in perplexity a guide, in

temptation a shield, and through life an unobscured light shedding its mellow and quickening beams through the firmament of your coming days. Go forth, then, my brother, in the unconquerable might of a pure, spiritual faith; go, in the panoply of a good conscience, in the energy of undying love, and with the approbation of Almighty God.

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE.

BY REV. ALONZO HILL, OF WORCESTER.

My Brethren and Friends of this Congregation: —

As my brother, who just now sat down, has offered to your newly-inducted pastor the right hand of fellowship, I am to extend to you the same token of our sympathy, and express our warm congratulations on an event so auspicious to yourselves and your children as the re-establishment of the ministry among you. We congratulate you that with such promptness and unanimity you have supplied the vacancy caused by the removal of our esteemed friend, your late pastor. We congratulate you that you have brought to the service of your altar one by whose matured wisdom you may be instructed, and in whose experience you may confide. God grant that the hopes which are this day cherished may be more than realized. God grant that the union now formed, cemented by the intimacy of years, severed only by death, may be the source of your highest religious joys and your best religious improvement.

But this is not the place nor the hour for mere congratulations. Life has duties, — great and solemn duties, —

and they multiply with every new relation. If I freely speak of yours as a Christian people, you will bear with me, for I am admonished to be brief. Instead of dwelling upon all the topics which the occasion would warrant, I shall limit myself to a few which are suggested by the peculiarity of the times and of your condition.

And foremost of all, I would press upon you, with what earnestness I may, the duty of each individual now and always according to his ability, to devote himself to the cheerful and hearty support of the ministry among you. This duty I urge, because the times seem to demand it. Let us reflect. How stands the case? In one respect there is a grand peculiarity among us in this community. We have undertaken to do what has never been attempted before. Elsewhere, in all other portions of Christendom, so vital has religion been deemed, not only to the soul's welfare, but to public security, that its interests have been provided for by law. It has been made a part of the State, and vast treasures have been accumulated, and vast establishments been formed for its support; and no event that does not shake society to its centre, can take from the ministry its resources, and leave the temple and altar to decay. But, here, religion maintains no such alliance with the State. Its very existence, in any rational form, depends upon the individual will and conscience. In their wisdom our people have said that they would charge themselves with the responsibility of its support, that they would see to it that its institutions be sustained, its light be shed into every man's dwelling, and its heavenly influence on every heart. It was a great and heavy responsibility; and could they realize with what interest the experiment is regarded by the wise and good of other lands; could they know how many eyes are at this moment turned upon them, how many anxious

inquiries are made by men borne down by the wearisome, crushing weight of religious establishments — will this people be true to themselves and adequately sustain these venerable institutions ?—they would feel it to be so. Alas, for that community which, indifferent to their vast importance, suffers its vigilance for a moment to sleep. He must be blind who cannot see that the best interests and hopes of society, the peace and good order of families, the present comfort and highest welfare of individuals, ar involved in their maintenance. Would you dare to live in a community where you should see the great marts of business opened and the temple of mammon thronged, and the halls of pleasure and science even embellished, while the temple of God should stand neglected, the winter wind sighing through the broken panes, and the long grass in summer growing about its doors? Would you dare to live among a people who enjoy every means of luxury, who are prospered in their worldly store and unstinted in their means of indulgence, but among whom stands no pulpit, no learned and pious ministry to interpret the oracles of truth, and the law of duty, and to proclaim that the eye of God is upon all, that the weak have a protector, the injured an avenger, and every man a guardian and judge on high? And yet, how inadequately do we realize the trust that is committed to us. How widely do the institutions of religion languish among us for the want of efficient support. For what slight causes do men withdraw their sympathy and aid, and leave the dust undisturbed to cover the altar, and silence unbroken to occupy the temple of religion. Avarice is alarmed by the phantom of a heavy tax; ambition is thwarted in some favorite plan; pride is offended by some imagined neglect; an obnoxious paragraph in the pulpit, or an unfortunate expression in the parlor, creates disaffec-

tion, and in the spirit of resentment the hand, that had better be severed from the body than offend, *signs off*, and leaves the Gospel to languish. And hence it has come to pass that there are many among us, who live in the midst of Christian privileges, but who have no visible connexion with religious institutions, who never put forth a finger to uphold the sanctuary, and bear along the ark of the Lord. Why, are our people bereft of their reason? Are they tired of the blessings which were never so showered upon any people before? Are they void of the natural affections which should lead them to provide for the safety and well being of their children? Would they see them drinking of the intoxicating cup of prosperity — plunging into the maddening strife of business,— encountering the fearful, heart-rending trials of life, and secure for them no religious influences, no refuge and sanctuary of peace? Yet the man, who stands aloof from bearing his share in the support of public religious institutions, does, in effect proclaim this. He does the act, which, if universally done, would arrest the voice of public teaching, close every church in the land, and leave the whole community to grow up in deadly indifference and virtual heathenism. Is he prepared for this? — for a catastrophe as fatal as if the beams of yonder sun were quenched, and the chill, and damps, and darkness of uninterrupted night were upon us? — for an event that would take away the chief charm of life and cause to gather a tenfold horror around the bed of death? Let him not console himself by saying that no such event is to be apprehended, that religion will not go down, but will be sustained though he, an individual, should withdraw his support. I trust in God it will — that there are those who appreciate it too truly, and love it too well, to count the cost of its maintenance. But where is his manhood, his decent self-

respect, who is willing to repose in such a peace? who enjoys the protection of religious institutions, whose dwelling, whose person, whose deepest and most enduring interests they render as safe as if legions of angels were encamped round about him, and yet who withdraws his countenance, and withholds the pittance required, on his part to sustain them? How can he stand up among men, and not feel the blush of shame mantling his cheek?

My Brethren — I have spoken of a great duty, though one by too many disregarded. I look with alarm on this indifference, that is creeping into our churches, and threatening their very existence — a feeling with which the solemnities of this day tell me that you have no sympathy. They assure me that you at least still appreciate the importance of the ministry, and are resolved to maintain your great and sacred trust. Go on then, as you have begun. Cheerfully bear your share in sustaining the great system of public religious instruction, and God will reward you. Never let your Minister be diverted from his appropriate work, — a work for which the strongest are found all too weak, — by worldly cares. I say it for you and the Gospel's sake, that, if he looks upon his young and dependent family, he be not haunted by apprehensions of future embarrassment, that he be not worn down and broken in spirits, by a wearisome wearing sense of dependence. There are victims enough now, of that narrow, short-sighted policy, which begins retrenchment at the house of God. Enough now of the gifted and devoted, overwhelmned by their torturing anxieties, have sunk into a premature grave, lost to religion and humanity. Your minister's time, talents, and strength, his profoundest thoughts, and most generous affections, are yours; let them be devoted unreservedly to your service. Let it be your individual and your united work to build up, and

strengthen this, your spiritual Zion,— so that you may be an example to believers,— so that they, who shall come up to your holy feasts, and sit with you around your altar,— your children and your children's children, may here be refreshed, may obtain light and deliverance, and life eternal. Sanctuary of God! Gate of Heaven! let it stand ever open, where the young may enter and find good instruction,— the tempted and fallen, a refuge,— the weary and laden, repose.

But the visible support of the institutions and ordinances of religion is only a small part of a people's duty. They should be anxious to place themselves within the reach of religious influences. They should be habitual in their attendance on the means of public and private religious instruction. It is no part of mere honorable leisure to which you have called your pastor, and in which I have been urging you to sustain him. It is not in such a position, if he is what we believe him to be, he will consent a moment to be sustained. He is not here to pass his life in quiet, lazy indulgence, and merely perform the decent offices which custom has sanctioned among you. Rather than be sustained by you on such terms, he would say in the indignant language of the Apostle, "Your money perish with you." He expects to work harder than any of you; to labor for you day after day, sabbath after sabbath, forenoon and afternoon, amid the beating storms of winter, and the burning heats of summer,— in weariness, in weakness, in all states of constitution and feeling. But if he is to preach, are you not also to hear? If he is to pray, are you not also to unite in his prayers? And in what way can you more effectually render him useless and utterly thwart him in the very object for which he is here placed, than through indifference or indolence, neglect his ministrations,— than leave him to present your united

petitions alone, and to dispense his instructions to the vacant air, amid the dreary echoes of bare walls, and empty pews. Any thing but this. Think of the influence which it must necessarily have upon him. If he is fit to stand in this place, he covets nothing so much, as your religious advancement,—he yearns to feed you with Heaven-born truth, and clothe you from the armory of God. For this he lives, and breathes, and toils, and prays. What then must be the consequence of this neglect? His right arm is palsied; his mind pines and is enfeebled; he becomes disheartened and inefficient. For this is depriving him of that which no care nor attention, nor profession of esteem will compensate — the opportunity to do good. You may tell him that his services are acceptable, and that you hold him in undiminished honor, but what is that to him, while your disregard of a plain duty, is proclaiming louder than your words, that they are doing no good. You may extend to him kindness and courtesy, and load him with your civilities, but what is that to him, while a sense of utter failure is entering like a thorn into his bosom, and you publish it by your want of respect for the word and ordinances of God. You may feast him and flatter him, and place the pillow of down beneath his head, but what is that to him, while it aches with what he is trying to do, and aches still worse at the thought of the little which he actually accomplishes. Never mock him with inconsistencies like these. Let him see, by the glad thronging that comes hither with the returning Sabbaths, that the honor of God is a thing near your hearts. Let him understand by your habitual and devout attention in this place, that you welcome and will ponder the lesson which he delivers. And though you sometimes hear opinions opposed to your own, and words that give you pain, do not let them alienate your affections, or chill your zeal for relig-

ious worship. Rather, should they lead you to honor the fidelity of him who utters them, and to reflect on them the more; for they may be opinions more rational than yours, and just the words you needed for your self-discipline and improvement. If you will come here in a right spirit, you will always find something with which you can sympathize, something, which, if carried out into the life, will make you wiser and better.

But you will see your pastor in other places than this. He will often be found in your homes. Receive him then as your spiritual guide and friend. Let not these occasional visits be spent in idle and unprofitable discourse. When he knocks at your doors, be assured he would gain entrance into the sanctuary of your hearts. When he seats himself at your fireside, whether amid the tokens of your worldly prosperity, the agonies of present suffering, or the sad memorials of recent bereavement, let me tell you, you can exhibit to him no readier proofs of your confidence and attachment, you can render no more grateful offering of hospitality, than to unbosom yourselves in your deepest experience, make known to him the difficulties and dangers, the fears and hopes, the joys and sorrows, into which the stranger cannot intermeddle. You can send for your Physician, and dwell even to tediousness on your weakness and ailings, do not by your indifference and icy reserve, shut out your minister from your confidential intercourse. Revere him as your bosom friend, seek his spiritual counsel; and for his sake and the truth's sake, and for the sake of your highest good, with the freedom of a friend, let him speak to you of God, and Christ, and duty and Heaven; let him commune with you in your retirement on your spiritual interests; and as you sit together and converse on the sacred theme, the tie of sympathy and affection will be drawn more closely

between you, and a new interest will be shed upon your relation. Religion will be felt to be a blessed reality, it will sweeten the pleasures, and soothe the sorrows of life; and he, whom you receive, and so cordially welcome, this day, will be the minister of consolation, the sharer of your joys, and the helper of your infirmities. When the hours of darkness come, he will direct you to the true light; when the hours of suffering and duty are over, you will be the crown of his rejoicing.

One more topic, and I have done. As a body of Christians, you have a great duty resting upon you. You are to take a part in carrying forward the great community to a higher state of mind, and Christian excellence. Placed as you are, in this influential and flourishing county, comprising so respectable a congregation, with such means of usefulness, and sending out as you do, so many of the young and active, into all parts of the land, where is the limit to the influence which you may exert? You are associated for objects, compared with which, every thing on earth is but a shadow,— objects enduring as God, grand and solemn as eternity. Every Church which God has gathered, should be a beacon light to shine far and near, over a dark and dreary world. Every Christian temple which God has reared should be a tower of strength, from which to fight manfully the battles of the Lord, and defend the city of our God, against the banded hosts of unbelief, wordliness, and sin. And who is to watch the Heaven-enkindled flame? Who is to go forth to the conflict? Not the Minister alone; for what can he do in a work so mighty? He has but one mind with which to counsel, one voice with which to speak. Unsupported, his arm is feeble,— unaided, his resources are few. What can he do alone towards making that great impression in behalf of truth, and goodness, which this Christian body ought to bear

upon this community. Even though he had an Aaron and a Hur, on either side, he would be found all too weak for such an enterprise. Let him have the efficient and cordial co-operation of this whole people. The command is to you as well as to him, to go and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,—not indeed in the pulpit, not in presence of the great congregation; but through whatever instrumentality else God has put into your hands, you must do what you can to sustain and extend abroad the heaven-born truths and influences of religion. Be ready to make some little sacrifice of personal ease and comfort, for the sake of the common good. Counsel and aid your pastor. Come at his bidding, when he invites you to enter the Sabbath School. Go at his entreaty to the wandering and neglected, and strive to bring them back to the Christian fold. Open wide your hearts when he speaks of the most remote of the human family. Open wide your hands when he pleads the cause of the poor, and destitute, and forsaken; for are ye not all brethren,—children of a common Father,—for whom good men have toiled,—for whom Christ died? In the name of Christ, then, whose cause is the cause of human happiness, in the name of God, in whose sight no well intended effort is vain, I charge you to be faithful to your mighty and solemn responsibilities; and whether we come and see you, or else be absent, let us hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast, in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.